To promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which inhere in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

The Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin

Published by The Christian Rural Fellowship, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

No. 180 February 1953

PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

THE BATTLE FOR FOOD

By John H. Reisner*

Fat men start no riots, someone has observed.

The reverse of this philosophic observation was put to a scientific test during World War II when a group of young conscientious objectors volunteered to participate in an experiment. The men, most of them idealistic and highly intelligent, were confined together for a period of time and their food was cut down gradually to a bare level of sustenance. The actions and attitudes of these human guinea pigs were observed carefully during the experiment. At first the group enjoyed spirited discussions on democracy and civil liberties, but as their food ration was cut down, there was a loss of physical energy with a corresponding development of mental lethargy. They became increasingly selfish, short-tempered, and melancholy. Their one thought, as the experiment went on, was food.

To accept social responsibility and to manifest concern for mutual welfare is difficult, if not impossible, for hungry people. On an international basis the relationship between hunger and war or between plenty and peace is obvious. A look at the map of the world indicates that where there is unrest there are low standards of living, not enough food. The provision of adequate levels of nutrition for all the people of the world is a problem that calls for international planning and action if we are to create the foundations of a cooperative and peaceful world.

FOOD SUPPLIES IN RELATION TO POPULATION

There is less actual food per capita in the world today than before World War II, in spite of the fact that world production of food is now greater than ever before. This situation is due to the very simple fact that population has been growing faster than food supplies have increased. Nor are these supplies evenly distributed. Surplus food-producing and exporting countries, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, are probably consuming more and

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* Mr. Reisner is Executive Secretary of Agricultural Missions, Inc., and Secretary of The Christian Rural Fellowship. He also serves as the Observer for the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs on the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

better food than ever before. Some nations, particularly in Asia where levels of nutrition were already low, find they have proportionately less food and are suffering more. Whereas the world food supplies have increased nine per cent since World War II, the population has increased thirteen per cent. It is estimated that the population of the world is increasing by some twenty to twenty-five millions each year.

The efforts throughout the world to increase food production have not been as adequate as the efforts put forth to decrease death rates. Regardless of the arguments for or against birth control the decrease of death rates will more than likely continue for some time, resulting in less food per person in many parts of the world and especially in areas where levels of nutrition have never been satisfactory. If birth rates could be decreased rapidly, it would unquestionably help the situation when combined with many other efforts devised to increase food production. The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in his annual report for 1951-1952, however, says on this point:

"The fact so often overlooked is that, if half the people in the overcrowded, underdeveloped areas of the world were to die today, there would still not be enough food to provide a decent diet for those that were left. Grant that the ratio of population to resources determines whether people have enough food. Why is it, then, that the people of the technologically-advanced countries are well fed and still have large potentialities for increased production? Because they have great resources of industrial development, advanced farm practices, adequate equipment and materials, favorable economic and social institutions, government services with high standards of excellence, and attitudes of mind characterized by eagerness to learn and willingness to work hard because knowledge and work bring adequate rewards. These are the creative resources of the human spirit, the resources capable of immense expansion. Until they are available to far more of mankind I am not willing to concede that the only solution of the world's present poverty is to accept it as permanent and cramp the human race into its narrow confines."

However, it is certain that the countries where undernourishment is greatest will continue to demand medical services that will wipe out malaria, tuberculosis, children's diseases, etc., with a marked increase in population. The only effective answer to the situation is to greatly increase food production. The term, "the battle for food," is not an idle thought. It requires different types of arms and strategy from those with which wars are fought, but it is a war nevertheless. It is quite clear that we already have sufficient knowledge as to how food production can be increased and we are learning, even though slowly, how to apply this knowledge to increase production. This is one war we cannot afford to lose. Peace and hunger are incompatible. And until we win the battle for food, we have not provided a permanent basis for peace.

Spearheading the attack on hunger throughout the world is the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. It was born out of a United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture at Hot Springs, Virginia, in May 1943. Forty-four nations participated in this conference and agreed to work for the abolition of want. By October 1945 enough governments had accepted the constitution which had been drawn up by an Interim Commission, and the first session of the FAO Conference was convened at Quebec, Canada. Forty-two nations became charter members. FAO membership has grown to sixty-eight countries and, at the moment, includes none of the iron curtain nations. The objectives of FAO, as stated in its constitution, are:

raising levels of nutrition and standards of living of the peoples...;

securing improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products;

bettering the condition of rural populations;

and thus contributing toward an expanding world economy.

The billions of dollars now being spent for increasing armed power adds not a single ounce to the world's food supply. These billions are being spent by about the same nations that are members of FAO, yet they somewhat haltingly provide but $5,250,000 for FAO to carry on its world-wide program, with a slightly larger amount contributed through the United Nations Technical Assistance Board to carry out its expanded technical assistance program. One wonders just how sincere we are in providing the foundations of peace! Nevertheless significant things are happening and important progress is being made. As we try to indicate what some of these advances are, we should keep in mind that they have come about very largely through the leadership which FAO has been able to supply.

THE GROWTH OF REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMS

Some agricultural problems can be met only through the cooperation of neighboring nations. One such problem is desert locust control. Desert locusts have made life precarious for many millions of people through known history. In 1951 FAO convened an International Locust Conference and is now administering the FAO Technical Advisory Committee on desert locust control. This means the pooling of all the valuable information that has been gathered in recent decades. It is now possible to anticipate locust outbreaks and plan on an international scale for their control.

Last year, beginning in northeastern Africa and ending in Pakistan and India, there was one of the worst locust plagues in recent history. All indications point to another plague this year. Through the development of new insecticides and techniques of locust control, including the use of the airplane to scatter poison bait, it is now possible for the first time in human history to greatly decrease the losses which locusts cause. With continuing concerted cooperation we can look forward to a time, possibly within a period of ten years, when desert locust outbreaks will either be a thing of the past or their ravages immeasurably decreased. One does not need a great deal of imagination to realize what this protection means, especially to the farmers of the Near East and Asia, in terms of food. In this cooperative enterprise are to be found Ethiopia, Egypt, Turkey, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, India, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The significance of such productive cooperation against a common enemy, by sharing planes and supplies at the point of greatest need, is readily apparent.

Less dramatic perhaps, but nonetheless significant, is the leadership which FAO has given to the eradication of rinderpest, a disease found in Asia and northeastern Africa. Especially in Asia, the greatest calamity that can befall a farm family is the loss of its water buffalo or other draft animal. This happens annually to tens of thousands of families. Rinderpest has already been eliminated in Siam. The expansion of present plans will eliminate it in India, Pakistan, and Ethiopia as well as in other countries.

On the basis of our present knowledge it should be only a matter of a dozen years until the dread foot and mouth disease will be under similar control. This disease is now found in Europe and Latin America. We can all recall the storm of protest over the slaughtering of millions of animals in Mexico as a control measure and the scare which an outbreak in western Canada gave to North America last year. A recently developed vaccine, costing about ten cents (US) per injection, is the new tool with which to combat this disease. Control and finally eradication is now primarily a matter of organization and administration.

International cooperation under the leadership of FAO can also be found in the International Rice Commission, which includes practically all the nations of the Far East, south and southeast Asia. This program includes the breeding of better strains of rice, the training of plant breeders, the use of fertilizers, and the possibilities of raising two crops of rice a year in certain areas. The postwar low production of rice in the Far East is one of Asia's most serious food problems.

On an international scale wheat-breeding is being carried on in the Near East; grasslands are being improved in the Mediterranean area; hybrid maize is being developed in Europe, the Mediterranean area, and India. Livestock production is being promoted in Latin America, and farm credit policies and programs have been initiated for Latin America. The fishing industry in practically the whole world has greatly benefited through international cooperation. Forest commissions for Latin America, the Far East, and the Near East have been set up, and the first Conference on Home Economics and Education in Nutrition was held in Trinidad this last summer. In all these projects essential knowledge is shared so that advances in any one country can be made immediately available to all others. This certainly is something new under the sun!

THE MOVEMENT FOR AGRARIAN REFORM

The fierce struggle among peasant people for land to cultivate on reasonable terms of rent and semifeudalistic systems of land tenure in some countries constitute major obstacles to increased food production. A number of the agencies related to the United Nations have been greatly interested in land reform, and among these FAO has taken a leading part. A series of basic studies has been instituted that will clarify the issues and determine the characteristics and effects of different types of land tenure on capital, management, labor, and the standards of living in the countries concerned. The studies will include monographs describing the common features of all the principal systems of land tenure and the problems to which they give rise. FAO is prepared, on request, under its technical assistance program to help member governments in preparing and carrying out action programs in the field of land tenure and reform.

Plans are also underway to bring government representatives and technicians together in regional meetings to discuss these problems and exchange ideas and experiences. The first of these conferences will be held in Latin America in the spring of 1953. It must be remembered that neither the United Nations nor any of its agencies can move into any of the acute national situations where land reform is urgently needed without an invitation from the host country. Land reform is the kind of problem on which some nations will move slowly. Recent accomplishments in Japan, Formosa, and Iran give promise in the future for land reform on a much wider scale.

To personalize the problem consider Abdul, a farmer in a Near East country, who has worked for many years as a laborer on a large farm owned by a

wealthy landlord. Under the recent land reform program of his government he has been given a chance to buy a small piece of land to farm as his very own. The government has arranged to buy the land from the big landowner and sell it to the men who worked the land, but where can Abdul get funds for a down payment on the farm he wants so much?

There are money lenders in every village, but they charge exorbitant rates, up to as much as one hundred per cent per year. There is a government bank but to get a loan there you must have collateral. Abdul has worked hard for many years, but he seldom has seen money and has been able to save none. He owns no cattle, has nothing to mortgage. There are no farmer credit cooperatives where he can get a loan to buy the few implements, some seed, and an all-purpose cow for draft power and milk that he will need.

Even if Abdul's credit problem were solved, what does he know about farming his small patch? He has no agricultural training. His only experience has been as a laborer on a large commercial farm. He needs a county agent to advise him, but extension services are not yet available in his country.

For every Abdul there are thousands of farmers whose farms are too small to be economical or who are at the mercy of unscrupulous landlords or who don't know from one year to the next where they will live and earn their living. These farmers have no Farmers' Home Administration, no Extension Service, no Soil Conservation Service, no farmer credit organizations, no producer or marketing cooperatives. They have land tenure problems.

FAO's Director-General Dodd has said, "There are many obstacles that need to be clearly understood and tenaciously attacked. Some we can skirt around or climb over or crawl under, but some, if we are to win through this battle, will have to be demolished. Land tenure problems come in the latter class."

INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF TECHNICIANS

The supply of trained personnel to lead in the many national programs of agricultural improvement and increased food production is the bottleneck which retards more rapid progress in most countries. Very few of these underdeveloped countries have the institutional facilities for such training. Through the leadership of FAO training centers around the world have been organized in which a number of countries cooperate and for which international faculties have been brought together. Examples of these are the training centers for agricultural extension in Latin America, for agricultural cooperatives in the Near East, for rice-breeding and soil fertility in the Far East, for statistics in Latin America, the Far East, and the Near East, for fisheries in Latin America and the Far East, for nutrition in the Far East and Africa, and for agricultural development projects for the Mediterranean area and Latin America. These training centers were all operated sometime during the year 1951-1952.

In addition to these training courses FAO provides fellowships and scholarships for study abroad under its expanded technical assistance program.

COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

A very large part of the work of FAO now consists of projects and programs in individual countries. FAO does not enter any country except by invitation. Each project therefore becomes a joint undertaking in which the country concerned and FAO share the cost. Most member countries now have FAO projects

and programs underway. FAO usually provides the personnel, and the country must meet the expenses involved in the studies to be undertaken.

A good example of this is Pakistan where agriculture is largely dependent on irrigation. Because of poor drainage, alkali has accumulated in the surface soil and millions of acres are now out of production. It is estimated that twenty to twenty-five thousand acres are going out of cultivation every year. Pakistan asked FAO for help, and the organization sent an agricultural engineer, a soils and land use expert, a hydrological engineer, and a ground water geologist to work out ways and means by which the land could be reclaimed by the removal of surplus water and salts.

One interesting feature of FAO technical teams is their international character. Out of forty-four experts requested by Iran, twenty-eight are now in the country. Of these nine are from The Netherlands, five from France, three from Denmark, two from the United States, two from Switzerland, and one each from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, and Japan. The value of such cooperation in dealing with man's common enemy, hunger, is hard to overemphasize.

FAO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

In addition to its own basic program FAO, with special funds provided by the Technical Assistance Board of the United Nations, is carrying on special projects in fifty-two of its member countries. By the end of last year agreements with member countries provided for 890 experts: 243 of these have completed their work; 399 are either in the field or being recruited and briefed for their field assignments; and 248 vacancies will be filled as soon as possible. The place is rapidly being reached where requests from member governments will exceed the resources available for their implementation. In addition to the projects in member countries FAO is concerned in twenty-seven projects to be operated in collaboration with other specialized agencies of the United Nations.

"THE WORLD'S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE"

Someone has referred to FAO as "the world's department of agriculture." Certainly this descriptive name is appropriate from many points of view. It is the one organization that is responsible for constantly surveying the world's food supplies and making periodic reports so that food shortages and famines can be anticipated. FAO could also be referred to as the world's clearinghouse for agriculture and all the problems relating to food and other agricultural production. We have by no means exhausted the list of significant activities. We have tried to indicate the absolute importance of FAO in today's world. Its objective surely is one of the noblest: that all people everywhere will have enough to eat. This is aptly reflected in its motto, "Let There Be Bread." FAO's ultimate concern is with the farmer and his family, for when all is said and done it is they, and not governments, that provide the increased food. They are the indispensable partners in this great enterprise.

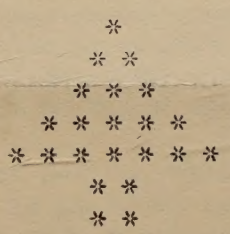
The Christian Church is officially related to this important enterprise through the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) and The Holy See. FAO has granted consultative status to them and both The Holy See and CCIA have appointed Observers to FAO. These representatives have the privilege of attending all meetings, of speaking under certain circumstances, and of presenting to the organization matters which they believe to be of concern. The CCIA was established by the World Council of Churches, composed of 158 Protestant and Orthodox denominational bodies in forty-three countries with an approximate

membership of 150 million, and by the International Missionary Council, composed of thirty-three national Christian councils and conferences.

FAO has been operating for less than eight years. It has won a high degree of confidence among the nations of the world. Indeed it has made itself indispensable.

FAO is not an agency of the United Nations, although its name: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, implies such a relationship. As a matter of fact FAO was organized before the United Nations and by many of the same countries. It is a united enterprise of many nations, hence this part of its name. It is not organically related to "the United Nations." It does cooperate with the United Nations at many points.

To the Christian bread has sacramental as well as physical values. The producers of food, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, are the ones who suffer most from social and economic disabilities. In many countries today it is these people who are increasingly in revolt against the injustices under which they live. In so many ways FAO and the Church are allies. I hope that Christians everywhere and the organizations which they represent, including the Church, will want to have a share in making the work of FAO known and, through their governments, insure the continuing and increasing support which will be necessary if its purposes are to be accomplished.



Note: Anyone desiring detailed information regarding the program and work of FAO may address letters to Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, Rome, Italy, or to the North American Office, Food and Agriculture Organization, 1325 C Street, S.W., Washington 25, D.C.

Printed in the USA